Volume 25, No. 02, November 24, 2017

Nation

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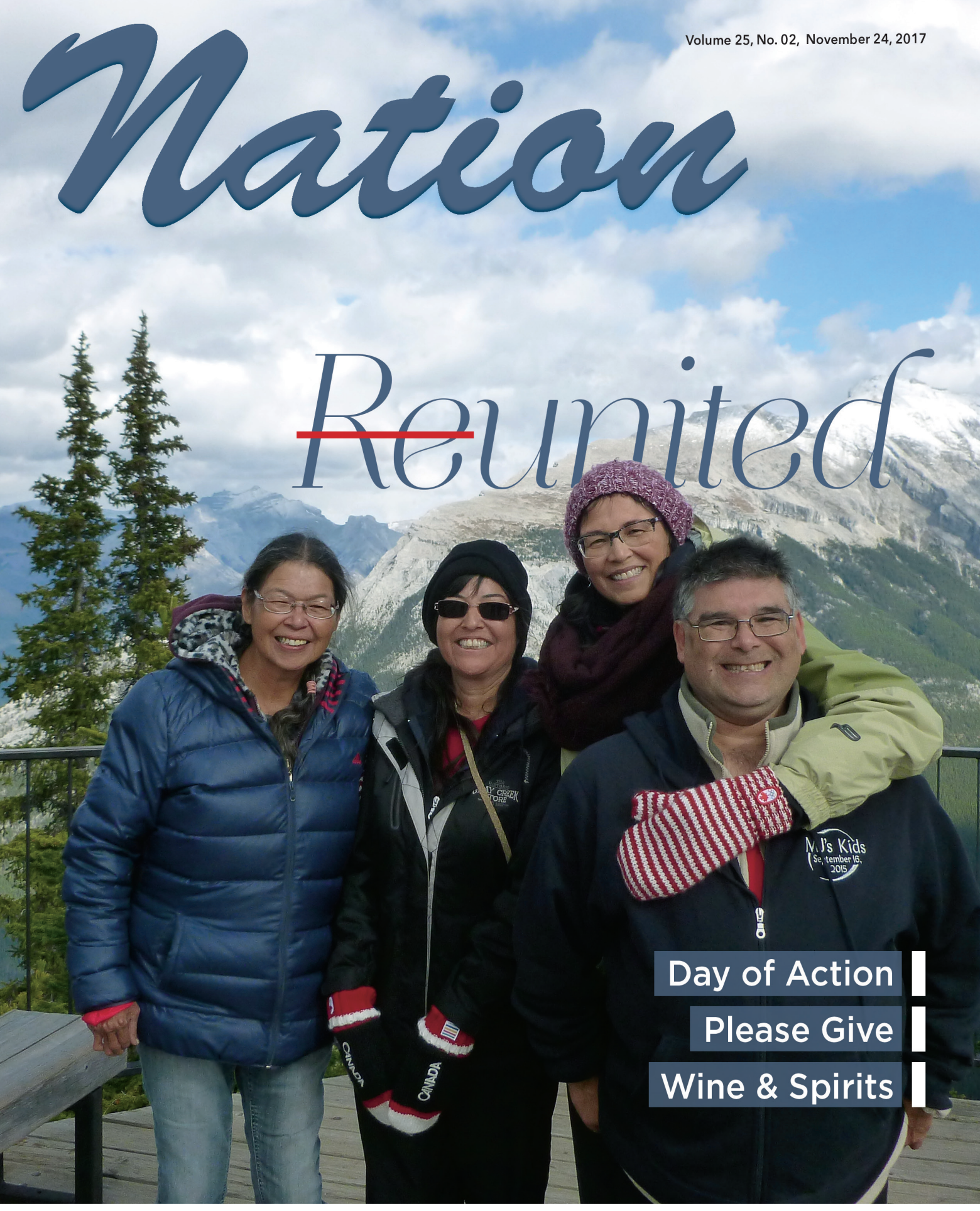

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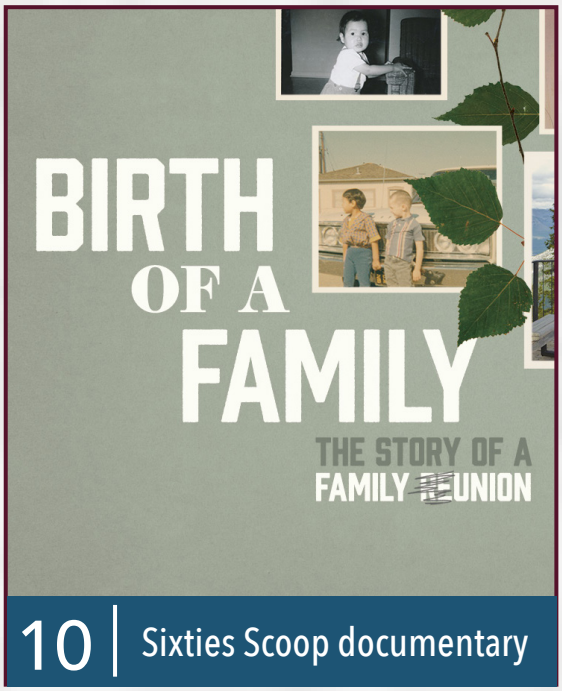

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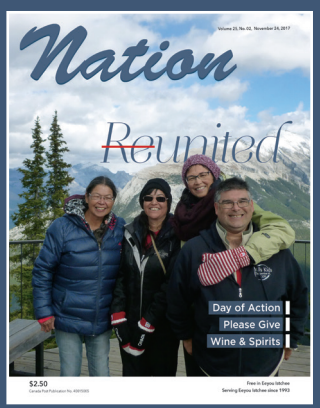


The Children of Mary Jane Adam
Photo provided by
Katja De Bock

Editorial

The best gift of all

by Will Nicholls

Having someone sleep over is a lot **better than the alternative.**

The holidays are upon us and it's wonderful how we gather together to celebrate them. At times, however, the celebrations can take a toll on our communities.

Every year we hear of accidents involving injuries and even the loss of loved ones. Many of these are alcohol-related.

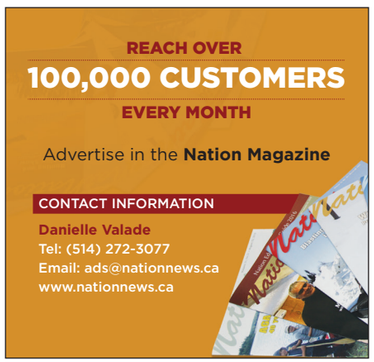
So this year I have two recommendations. The first is something you hear every year around the holidays: ensure you have a designated driver. It may sound simple but it seems every year and not only during the holidays that this caution is forgotten. If you can, please offer to stay sober. One night of giving up a drink or 10 can be your Christmas gift to friends and family. Let them know this is for them and you love them and want them to be around for the year to come. If the party is at a home and no ride is available than have them sleep over. Insist on it as a group as it is more effective. Having someone sleep over is a lot better than the alternative.

Secondly, I would ask those who worship in our churches to be willing to help out their fellow man or woman if they don't drink. It can even be part of a church's fundraising effort. Volunteers could charge $10 or $15 for a ride and getting your vehicle home. A lot of good Samaritans can make a difference without making too much of an effort. Ensuring that the holidays are safe for all and that they don't become a time of sorrow is a precious gift not only for the recipient(s) of the ride but for all those around them.

Well the holiday season is upon us and I don't want to preach on and on so I'll cut this short.

Just remember to take care of each other and to make sure everyone is okay. This means more than just the party. Make sure no one feels alone and lost during this time. Let's all have a good memory to take on our journey through life and that means keeping the Cree traditions of caring and sharing as strong as we can.

All of us here at *the Nation* wish you the best not only for the holidays but for every day.



the Nation is published every two weeks by Beesum Communications **EDITORIAL BOARD** L. Stewart, W. Nicholls, M. Siberok, Mr. N. Diamond, E. Webb **EDITOR IN CHIEF** Will Nicholls **DIRECTOR OF FINANCES** Linda Ludwick **EDITORS** Lyle Stewart, Martin Siberok **PRODUCTION AND SOCIAL MEDIA COORDINATOR** Dan Isaac **CONTRIBUTING WRITERS** S. Orr, X. Kataquapit, D. Isaac, J. Grant, A. German, B. Powless **DESIGN** Matthew Dessner **SALES AND ADVERTISING** Danielle Valade, Wendall Gull **THANKS TO: Air Creebec**

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News

Justice *Prevails*

by Ben Powless | Photo provided by AFN

Senate bill restores Indian Status to children born to women who married non-Natives

A political showdown between the Canadian Senate and the House of Commons ended by answering one father's dream – returning Indian Status to hundreds of thousands across Canada.

Indigenous Senator Lillian Dyck was in tears at the November 7 announcement, saying that First Nation women waited 150 years for this change.

In 2015, Stéphane Descheneaux – an Abenaki from the Odanak reserve – had sued the federal government for racial discrimination. He was unable to pass along his Indian Status to his three daughters because his grandmother had married a non-Native.

The courts agreed, and told Canada they would have to remove gender-based discrimination from the Indian Act. It was a move that potentially opens the door to hundreds of thousands of individuals who lost status because a mother or grandmother had married a non-Indian before 1985.

In October 2015, senators introduced Bill S-3 to amend the Indian Act. This was an unusual move, as most legislation to amend existing laws originates in the House of Commons.

After Bill S-3 passed the Senate, it was then sent to the House of Commons. MPs chose to amend it, causing the Senate, along with many Indigenous groups, to protest that those amendments would keep discrimination in the Indian Act.

The original court ruling put in place a deadline for changes to be made to the Indian Act – July 2017. The Trudeau government argued that they would have to pass the bill without the desired provisions to stay within that deadline.

However, Deschenaux's lawyer, along with the Senate, urged the court to push back the deadline so that they could take the time necessary to get the bill right. They were successful, and the final court deadline was moved to December 22, 2017.

Over the summer, pressure from Indigenous organizations and the Senate increased. Groups like the Native Women's Association of Canada and the Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action called on the government to end discrimination.

It appears they were successful.

On November 7, the government declared that it would no longer oppose the Senate bill's amendments to the Indian Act.

It was also a personal fight for Senator Dyck. A member of the Gordon First Nation in Saskatchewan, Dyck's own mother had lost her status in 1943. Dyck didn't get her status returned until 1985.

AFN National Chief Perry Bellegarde called it a "positive step for First Nations women and girls and for all First Nations families."

The government is now expected to conduct consultations, and later report to First Nations bands any estimates of how many new members they may have.

Detailed figures on the number of people who could be affected are not available. They could be applied to descendants of any woman who lost her status, going all the way back to 1876.

Some commentators say the figure is as few as 80,000, while others say as many as a million people could become Status Indians as a result of the legislation.

Bill S-3 will now return to the House of Commons, where Senator Dyck hopes the process will conclude by mid-December before the court-imposed deadline.

"Finally, Indian women will be recognized in law as having equal rights as Indian men to transmit their status as registered Indians and all that goes with it – your language, your culture, your connection to your family, your connection to your community," Dyck said in the Senate.

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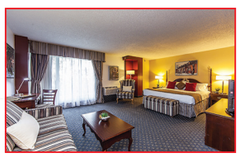

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Flouting the law

Protest targets Trudeau government's **refusal to follow court orders** on funding children's services

by Ben Powless
Photo provided by AFN

After a series of federal rulings that Canada was discriminating against First Nations children, Indigenous organizations held a National Day of Action on First Nations Child Welfare in Ottawa recently.

The event was organized by the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), which, with the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society (FNCFCS), took the federal government to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal over the issue in 2007.

Indigenous organizations argue that First Nations children do not access government services at the same level as children in non-Native communities.

They were also seeking to have Jordan's Principle enshrined in law. The concept is named after Jordan River Anderson, a child from Norway House Cree Nation in Manitoba born with a variety of health issues. Manitoba and the federal government fought for two years over who was to pay for his home care. In the end, Jordan died while still in the hospital, never having had the chance to live at home.

Jordan's Principle was established to ensure that this wouldn't happen again. It says that the government level first contacted for help is obliged to pay immediately, while the details over reimbursements can be dealt with later.

This is particularly relevant for Indigenous children, as Statistics Canada recently reported that Indigenous children require acute care up to 3.8 times as much as non-Indigenous children, with respiratory diseases being particularly common.

Nine years later, the Tribunal agreed with the AFN and FNCFCS, ordering the government to immediately cease discrimination against First Nations children.

Marc St. Dennis, the Reconciliation and Research Coordinator at the FNCFCS, estimates that the ruling will affect about 165,000 First Nations children.

"It was a huge, unprecedented win for the kids. Nothing like this has ever occurred in Canada," St. Dennis told *the Nation*.

However, the story didn't end there. Since the ruling in 2016, the two organizations have gone back to the Tribunal three times to argue that Canada has yet to implement and follow the ruling. All three times, the Tribunal agreed.

"We're seeing now, one-and-a-half years after the case, Canada continues not to comply with the orders, so that's why we have the National Day of Action – to call on Parliament to stand up for First Nations kids," said St. Dennis.

"The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal's rulings are simple and clear – First Nations children deserve to be treated fairly," said AFN National Chief Bellegarde at the rally in Ottawa. "Our children deserve the same care and services that are available to other children in this country... They should not have to wait any longer."

AFN Manitoba Regional Chief Kevin Hart echoed that call.

"For First Nations, this is part of a long and sad story that goes from the Indian Residential Schools system to the Sixties Scoop to today's child welfare system," said Hart. "Our message today is simple: stop taking our children from us, honour the Tribunal ruling, and work with us to give our children hope and opportunity."

An estimated 300 people attended the rally, with some coming from as far as the Nishnabi Aski Nation in northern Ontario.

The federal government maintains on its website that it is working towards implementing Jordan's Principle. While St. Dennis agrees that many more children have received services than before, he says the government is still trying to fight the case.

After the last ruling, in May 2017, Canada brought the case for judicial review, arguing that there are some situations that require them to take more time.

However, St. Dennis said that the Tribunal found no cases where that was deemed necessary.

He says that they will continue calling on the government to comply with the Tribunal rulings until they do. He compared the 10-year fight to ensure services for First Nations children with the Marshall Plan, the 10-year plan to rebuild Europe after World War II.

"If they can do that, we can certainly provide services to First Nations children and end discrimination."

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In Brief

Evacuations in Chisasibi

Several houses and the Chisasibi clinic were evacuated November 14 after a noxious smell alarmed people in the neighbourhood.

When first responders arrived at the clinic, waiting patients and staff were instructed to leave the premises. Nearby dwellings were also evacuated during this time. All residents and clients were allowed back into the clinic and their homes about five hours later, shortly after 9 pm.

With nearby excavation, some speculate that the smell may have originated with hydrogen-sulphide gas that is naturally occurring in boggy or marshy areas.

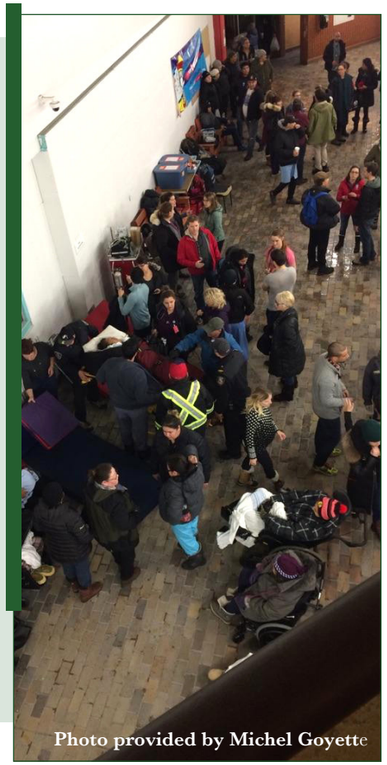


Photo provided by Michel Goyette

Suncor Petronor

On November 3, the Calgary-based oil and gas company, Suncor Energy Inc announced that it had purchased a 41 per cent stake in PetroNor, the Cree owned and operated petroleum product distributor.

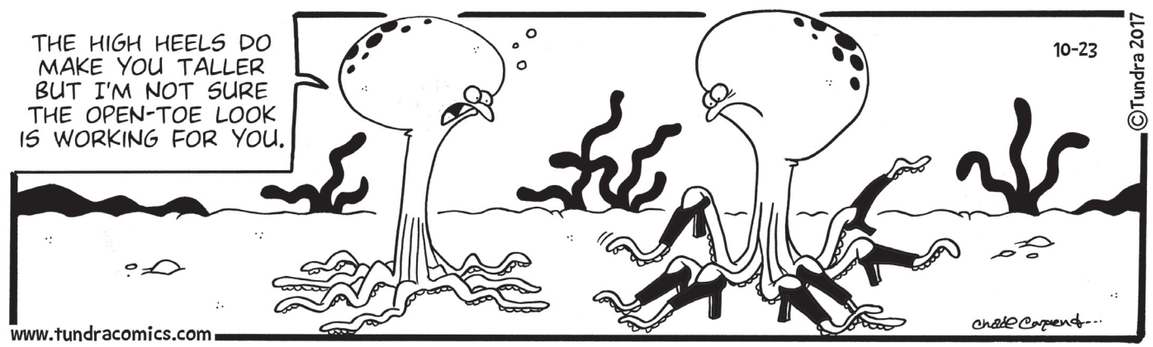
PetroNor president said the relationship, "demonstrates a shared belief in long term growth opportunities for PetroNor and the northwest regions of Quebec."

the Nation corrections

In the rush of trying to produce a bi-weekly magazine, sometimes things slip through the cracks. *The Nation* would like to address two such incidences in our last issue (25-01).

In our coverage of the recently built culture classroom in Waswanipi, we mistakenly misspelled the community's name several times within the articles text. We would like to take this time to apologize for our mistake, and ensure it won't happen again.

The Nation would also like to apologize for incorrectly naming Matthew Diamond, the second hunter to be located in the search, as William Diamond in the past issue of *the Nation*. Director of Community Services Ryan Erless also pointed out that an October 25 gathering in Waskaganish was in fact a prayer gathering while a vigil was held on a separate day.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Documentary on the Sixties Scoop **illuminates a universal thread**

Photos provided by Katja De Bock
by Dan Isaac

This isn't just the story of these four siblings – it's the story of over **20,000** Indigenous children in Canada

Birth of a Family is a touching chronicle of four siblings coming together, 50 years after being torn apart by the Sixties Scoop.

In association the National Film Board and directed by Cree-Nakota filmmaker Tasha Hubbard, the documentary follows the first meeting of Betty Ann, Esther, Rosalie and Ben as they spend a week together in Banff.

Each were born to Mary Jane Adam, a young Dene mother from Saskatchewan, and each was adopted out as an infant, spending their lives separated from their language, culture and family in non-Indigenous homes.

Though none of the now adult children report abuse suffered at the hands of their adopted or foster parents, what they've lost is palpable throughout the film.

From the first tearful hug to blowing out birthday candles representing the 200-plus birthdays the family members spent not knowing one another,

Like the characters in the film,
I can never
get back the time I missed with my family. ***It's gone...***
What I can do is look to the future and give my daughter everything that was
taken from me

- Tasha Hubbard

it's clear what's been taken from them – time. Things most of us take for granted, like culture and family, are the priceless pieces of the puzzle missing from the lives of Mary Jane's offspring.

At times, it's as if they revert back to children as they share a genuine feeling of family for the first time – skipping rocks, holding hands and getting close to the edge of a cliff at a mountain look-out. All the while they laugh and laugh and laugh.

Later in the film, the siblings meet an Elder who shows them how to play the hand drum and tan a hide. Betty Ann makes a tearful confession: "I'm 56 years old and everything he showed us in there was new to me. That's not right, is it?"

The director later explained the irony of that moment. "They're Dene and the Elder was Nakota," said Hubbard.

It's an incredibly moving story that hits a universal chord. This isn't just the story of these four siblings – it's the story of over 20,000 Indigenous children in Canada. Many of whom never found their family.

So while there's heart-wrenching emotion at every turn, there's joy too. The documentary is the family's happy ending.

As for Hubbard, she grew up on a farm not far from her reserve with a non-Indigenous family. As a teenager, she found out she had 10 brothers. She admits the closeness of the subject matter of the film made this project different than her earlier documentaries.

The film is a hit – it came in sixth out of 200 films at Hot Docs last May in Toronto and was an official selection of the imagineNATIVE film festival in October.

"Previously I took a more expository approach to filmmaking. I would rely on narration and interviews to tell the story," Hubbard said during the question period after screening the film at the Montreal International Documentary Festival held at Concordia University. "With this film I just wanted to capture the story of them coming together as a family, organically."

The fly-on-the-wall technique proved more difficult than initially imagined. At one point during the filming Hubbard took her cameraman by the ear to pull him out a sibling's face, an apparent "no-no" in the documentary world.

The cast and crew shared two tiny cabins in the Canadian Rockies for the duration of the shoot. And when they left the cabins, there was a lot of running around.

"They would tell us, 'Oh, we're going to go to this today,' and then the director of photography would have to race ahead and ask for permission to film there," said Hubbard. "They were all mic'd up, so I could hear everything they said. A couple times they lost Ben and I'd hear them say, 'Where's Ben? We lost Ben!' And I'd want to yell 'Ben!' in the food-court, but I had to stay impartial."

Despite the production issues, the film is a hit – it came in sixth out of 200 films at Hot Docs last May in Toronto and was an official selection of the imagineNATIVE film festival in October.

Hubbard says that Canada is just beginning to have these conversations surrounding residential schools and the Sixties Scoop. For these discussions to continue, the voices of survivors must be amplified and listened to. She also commended the creation of the Indigenous Screen Office and encouraged Indigenous filmmakers to start telling their own stories.

"Indigenous storytellers are at a point now where it really is, 'Nothing about us without us,'" said Hubbard. "We're good at it. We're good storytellers."

She also addressed the recent Sixties Scoop settlement.

"Like the characters in the film, I can never get back the time I missed with my family. It's gone," Hubbard noted. "What I can do is look to the future and give my daughter everything that was taken from me."

Birth of a Family had its network premiere November 19 on CBC. If you weren't able to catch it, contact the NFB education department and request a community or classroom screening.

"Indigenous story tellers are at a point now where it really is, 'nothing about us ***without us'"***

- Tasha Hubbard

Photos of the convention provided by La Grande Dégustation

La Grande Dégustation de Montréal

Holiday Cheers

by Will Nicholls

You never know what to expect at the Grande Dégustation de Montréal, aka the wine and spirits exhibition. Last year featured South American Syrah and Shiraz wines; the previous year was rife with great Scotch whisky – to both our delight and horror.

This year, fine Champagne was the way to part people from their allowance. A bubbly that tickles your throat is worth diverting a dollar or, more likely, a couple of C notes from your pocket. It all depends on why you are doing so. Champagne is not something to drink to excess. The next morning will resemble spending some time in Satan's hometown. Instead, it is meant for celebrating a moment with someone you love, or at a special occasion.

The first Champagne I sampled was Taittinger at a reasonable price of $59.75. It is dry with only the barest hint of sweetness with a floral and fruity scent while the bubbles are long-lasting. On a personal note, it was the first Champagne I ever sabered and then savoured. Sabering Champagne bottles goes back to France's Musketeers. They would use their cavalry sabers to open the bottles by sliding the blade on the neck. When it would reach the raised lip the cork would go flying with a glass ring around part of it. The break would be clean, but this only happens with Champagne in thick bottles. In keeping with Indigenous roots I have even used a tomahawk to do this.

An interesting development is Moet and Chandon's Imperial Ice coming in at $81. They said they noticed people putting ice into Champagne to keep it cold. You are not supposed to do this so they developed sweet and fruity white Champagne that allows for ice cubes.

A nice rosé Champagne was Ayala, coming in at $65.50. It was dry but the bubbles had no staying power. It was refreshing on the tongue though with a nice mellow bouquet that pleased the nose. It makes a nice Italian Kiss cocktail if you can find all the ingredients.

One of the interesting moments was finding Jacquart Brut Mosiaque. This Champagne is the result of 1,800 winegrowers coming together to create a unique taste. A mosaic of many different growers to make a fresh, never-seen-before

full-bodied and bubbly offering for your consideration at $47.25 a bottle. This Champagne must be ordered, as it is a private import. So get to your SAQ early and request it in time for the holidays.

That's enough about the Champagnes, which aren't for everyone. It is always interesting to see the difference in what you order in a bar and what you can actually enjoy. Grappa in a bar often tastes like alcohol mixed with gasoline. Castagner Grand Cru Grappa will change your mind as it is smooth and tasty. It can only be ordered through private importer Vivino.com.

Another misconception deals with tequila. Bar choices are usually limited to Tequila Bang Bang, which is raw and harsh going down the throat. To get the real taste try Jose Cuervo Especial at a mere $35 a pop. A peppery tasting drink that is a joy to drink shows you there is something true about a tequila made from the blue Agave cactus leaves. The 1800 series costs $38.25 and is comparable to Patron Tequila which costs around $80 in Quebec. New to Quebec is the 1800 Coconut Tequila. While tasty by itself add some pineapple juice and you have a Coconut Crusher. A refreshing drink that will please anyone. We can see this being a great summer thirst quencher.

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Visiting the Jack Daniels booth was a duty. Besides the regular stock they presented a new product, Jack Daniels Tennessee Straight Rye Whiskey. Same smell as the regular Jack but a smoother taste

Visiting the Jack Daniels booth was a duty. Besides the regular stock they presented a new product, Jack Daniels Tennessee Straight Rye Whiskey. Same smell as the regular Jack but a smoother taste. They were the only ones with two slushy machines with lemonade and strawberry lemonade flavours. Doing a half-and-half on the slush then adding regular Jack and Tennessee Fire Jack was amazing. It will be a summer drink you'll never forget. The Tennessee Fire added to dark-chocolate cocoa is the thing to do for those cold winter nights.

More than a few Cree know the name Yanick Hebert, a Cree Construction employee working for the ADC subsidiary. He's gone into the private importation business for wines and spirits, a growing market in Quebec.

One of the wines he imports is from Switzerland, not a place many would think of as a wine region. Tasting the white wine Hebert promotes will change your mind. It's a great addition to any meal with fish. I'd recommend as a side dish, green string beans pan fried in olive oil, garlic and slivered almonds.

You can contact Hebert at La Petite Dégustation. Call 514-833-4949 for more information, you'll find the $21 price tag is easily affordable. Private importers often charge less than the SAQ for quality wines making them a place to go to buy quantity while getting quality for the holiday company get-togethers.

Have a happy and safe holiday from all of us at *the Nation*.

Have a **happy and safe** holiday from all of us at *the Nation*

the spirits of Quebec

by Lyle Stewart

New distilleries offer distinct tastes for **whiskies and gin**

Apart from the multinational giant Seagram, there is surprisingly little history of whisky distillers in Quebec. As this year's Grande Dégustation demonstrated, however, that is changing, and fast.

Micro-distillers are multiplying throughout the province. *The Nation* visited three of them at wine and spirits exhibition.

Maison Sivo

Janos Sivo lives in Franklin, Quebec, south of Montreal near the US border. He emigrated here from Hungary three decades ago, bringing with him his family's knowledge of distilling fruit brandies. The Sivo name is known throughout Hungary for their quality brandy.

But Sivo always wondered why Quebec never produced single malt or rye whisky. So, four years ago he set out to correct that by founding Maison Sivo.

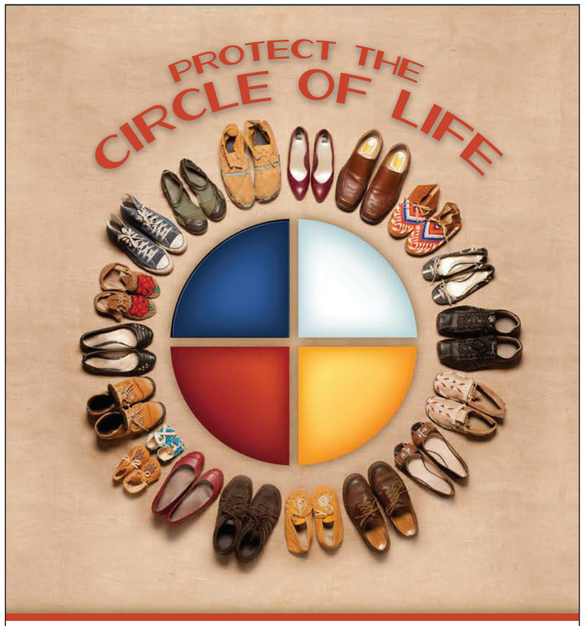
"I learned in Hungary about fruit distilling," he explained. "But the rye is new to me. I thought that there was no good reason for Quebec not to have an excellent whisky. Because you have the seed grains, the air is good and the water is excellent!"

The Sivo rye is distinctive, clean and crisp with a lingering and familiar taste that doesn't quite make sense. Like many discoveries, this original rye came about by accident.

"North American ryes are made with a kind of grandfatherly approach," Sivo observed. "With my rye, the number one difference is the yeast. For this I use a tequila yeast, which happened by accident but brings out flavours and spices that other yeasts do not."

At $26, it is very affordable. "My agency told me I made a mistake pricing it so low!"

Sivo also produces Shámán, a bitter herbal liqueur with origins in Bavarian monasteries. Served cold and straight as a shooter, Shámán has a powerful, bitter and floral taste. Watch out for the kick though!



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Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay

Les Subversifs

Les Subversifs is the first spirits micro-distillery in Quebec. Based in Saint-Alexandre – near Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu – for the past 10 years, they produce the Piger Henricus gin and a distinctive liqueur that are both now sold at the SAQ. They also have a white whisky sold only by private order from the SAQ.

Juliette Balthazard is the daughter of the distillery's founder, Fernando Balthazard, and is evidently proud of her father's work.

Asked what makes their products "subversive," she said, "We are trying to invent products that take other drinks that have a poor image, like crème de menthe, and use them to make a different product."

Their flagship gin, Piger Henricus, is made of traditional dry gin botanicals, such as juniper berries, coriander, angelica root, lemon peel and cardamom. An extra ingredient also goes into the recipe – parsnip, which gives it a slightly bitter taste and a subtle floral aroma.

I also tried the Réduit Piger Henricus, a lower alcohol gin (23%) flavoured with maple syrup. It's subtly sweet, and Juliette says it can be consumed hot as well as over ice. It makes a good sipping drink that packs less of a punch. I'd like to try it poured over vanilla ice cream.

Ouwah Store
CHISASIBI QC
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ouwahstore@gmail.com
www.facebook.com/ouwahstore/

Photo by Lyle Stewart

1769 Distillery

The first distillery in Canada was established in Quebec City in 1769, when shipping duties made it too costly for French settlers in New France to continue buying rum from the West Indies. They began to distil rum from molasses brought back on British ships from the islands.

That's why Andrew Mikus named his still in the southwest Montreal borough of Verdun the "1769 Distillery" when it was founded in 2014. His career was spent in television and film production, but now what may have been a hobby has become his life's passion: distilling classic spirits.

Certified as a Master Distiller, Mikus specializes in gin – 1769 features a "Breakfast Gin," which retails for $40. Mikus says it is so called because it is a traditional Madison Park gin infused with bergamot from English gunpowder teas such as Earl Grey, among other ingredients.

But does he actually recommend it for breakfast? "Oh yeah," Mikus smirked. "Every morning!"

Mikus also makes a Lady Grey martini – one ounce of bergamot gin, half an ounce of lemon juice, elderflower syrup, a vegan foamer instead of egg whites, along with bitters and ice. It goes down smooth with an invigorating kick.

It's among the cocktails the distillery makes for certain Montreal restaurants by mixing them up in 20-litre barrels. Look for the wooden barrels stamped with "1769" sitting on the bar at Les Enfants Terribles and at the new Nacarat bar at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel.

Sharing the love

Where to give so that all Cree can enjoy the seasonal feast this holiday season

by Amy German & Dan Isaac

While sugar-plum fairies may be dancing in the minds of some children of the north come Christmas, for others it's a time of worry that they won't get to participate in part of the fun and joy that is Christmas. This is why most communities collect food, toys and donations so that the less fortunate can enjoy the holiday season. Here is how you can help spread the joy in your community.

Chisasibi

The holiday food drive is being held by the local Cree Nation Youth Council in Chisasibi. According to Anita Napash of the CNYC, "We'll take cash donations or toys or cheques to buy gifts for needy children or to purchase turkeys. Help out other youth and other people under 35. Last year, we had 90 applicants with a total of 208 kids."

Eastmain

Public Health is giving away turkeys in Eastmain with participants in their programs, including: Head Start, Mom's Time Out, Brighter Futures, the Teen Group, and the Traditional Group as well as their Junior Canadian Rangers. According to Andrea Mianscum, turkeys are being distributed to all of the families whose children participate in any of these life-enriching programs.

Mistissini

In Mistissini, the Meechum store is being renovated but they are still preparing for their yearly Wreath of Hope event.

To meet the needs and prepare the food baskets and children's gifts, Meechum is approaching things differently this year. They will continue to raise money for the Wreath of Hope fund. Customers can contribute $5 or more to the fund and their names will be written on a paper wreath that will be displayed on store windows. A wreath will be hung on the store window to display the amount that has been raised as well. The goal is to raise enough funds to prepare baskets for all families in need and a little extra for needs that come up throughout the year.

Their Angel Tree will also be set up differently, with a binder prepared with angels that people can select and sign for either Philomene Rabbitskin or Ariel Mattawashish. These gifts will be distributed to families in need.

Meechum's staff and management agree that their greatest moment is when they prepare the baskets and organize the beautifully wrapped gifts in the store. Staff and other volunteers help prepare and deliver these to families in need.

Nemaska

Coordinated by the Wellness Centre and assisted by Public Safety, Nemaska's annual food drive for families in need will continue without a toy because of distribution complications. If you would like to contribute, there will be a donation box at the mall/store in Nemaska for dried goods. "We do the food drive during Christmas because we know it's a time when people want to give gifts even if they don't have enough for themselves," said Stella Moar of the Wellness Centre. "This helps everyone give."

Oujé-Bougoumou

A holiday turkey basket will be distributed to families in need by the band office in Oujé-Bougoumou. If anyone would like to donate food, financial support or gifts, they are asked to approach the Wellness Department located at the Oujé-Bougoumou Band Office.

Photos by Gaston Cooper, Jacques Larouche

Waskaganish

Given the community's recent tragedy and subsequent search-and-rescue efforts, planning for the annual food drive has been put on hold. We'll update you when the information becomes available.

Waswanipi

Every year in Waswanipi, the entire Social Development Department comes together to coordinate and plan food and gift donations for the holiday season. A meeting is scheduled in mid-November to discuss this year's food drive. According to Irene Otter, drop-off locations for the drive take place at the church, grocery store, band office and clinic. An update can be expected sometime soon. "We've found in the past that giving back and supporting the less fortunate is good for our community as a whole," said Otter.

Wemindji

The Wemindji Band Office is coordinating food, clothing, financial and gift donations this holiday season. If you're interested in donating, contact Stella Lameboy Gillpin, Director of Community Services: 819-978-0264, #222 or director_CS@wemindji.ca

Whapmagoostui

According to the Band Office's Francis George, raising money for the needy so that they can have Christmas hampers is all about Christmas Bazaars, bake sales and all sorts of fun to raise money to fill those hampers for the less fortunate. George, who is from the women's association said that they would be posting photos of all their fundraising money on facebook if anyone was interested in checking that out.

"We've found in the past that giving back and ***supporting the less fortunate*** *is good for our community as a whole"*

- Irene Otter

Ouwah, store!

Brian Webb's business provides for Chisasibi and keeps community traditions alive

by Joshua Grant | Photos by Michel Goyette

Just before Christmas a few years ago, Brian Webb's mother set out to buy presents in Chisasibi for her grand daughters in Montreal. To her dismay, she found there weren't many options available in her home community.

"She couldn't find anything," said Webb. "The only things she found were notebooks, like office pads. So I thought, 'Why don't I start myself a business in Chisasibi?'"

The following year, Webb began shipping merchandise to his sister Sandra Webb in Chisasibi, who sold the items out of her basement. He and business partner Michel Goyette worked full time and Sandra helped them out on weekends when she wasn't doing her regular job.

"We started with Chisasibi hoodies, with a floral or a goose design," said Webb. "That was our first project and it went very well – we got a lot of positive feedback. From there, we added new designs and other products that people were requesting."

As the business grew, the three of them used whatever space they could find to sell their merchandise. Finally, last February, they were able to snag a spot in the Chisasibi commercial centre.

"We're very limited for space in the community," Webb explained. "We started in my sister's basement and then moved to my Mom's. Then we moved into the dining room of a restaurant [in the commercial centre] that had been closed for 18 years. We started this with no funding whatsoever; it was with money from our personal income. We began small, grew slowly and each time we had profit we would reinvest it."

Not long after moving to the commercial centre, a passing remark made by a group of local youth gave the business its name.

"Some kids walked by and said, 'Ouwah, store!'" laughed Webb.

He explained that the term "ouwah" originates from Chisasibi and is quite versatile – typically used to express astonishment, frustration or disgust. In this case, the youth were amazed they had a place to buy baseball caps.

"People walk in they say things like, 'My late grandmother would have loved this store,' or, 'My late mother, if she was still around, I'm sure she would be here.' People have been saying this should have happened much earlier," added Webb.

The Ouwah store offers a little something for everyone, and ultimately exists to meet the diverse needs of a Cree community. What started as a store for hoodies and baseball caps has expanded to provide supplies for sewing and knitting, items required for traditional walking-out ceremonies and dance regalia, and most recently, protective equipment, like work boots.

"We started selling fabric, now we're into yarn and today we opened up our shoe department," said Webb. "We have some leather and there's going to be fur coming soon. We get a lot of requests from the people who come in looking for something specific that we don't have, so we make an effort to get it for them at the best price possible."

> *"The reason we're here is to fulfill the needs of the people"*
>
> - Brian Webb

With business going well, the Ouwah store has started shipping outside of Chisasibi. The store now has four employees from the community.

"We didn't give up, we just kept going," beamed Webb. "Now, people from out of town are asking for our products, so we've started shipping to Ontario and Arctic Canada. I don't know what the future holds, but I guess we'll see. Eventually we want a website and maybe do mail orders, but for now we do that through Facebook."

While competition is beginning to grow, Webb is proud of the variety of items available at Ouwah – even the "pancake hats" (flat berets) that are so popular with women in the community.

"The reason we're here is to fulfill the needs of the people, specifically the customs and culture here in Chisasibi," Webb concluded. "It seems the tradition of sewing and making garments, the things that were used in the Cree culture, were starting to fade. With this store, we might be able to bring them back."

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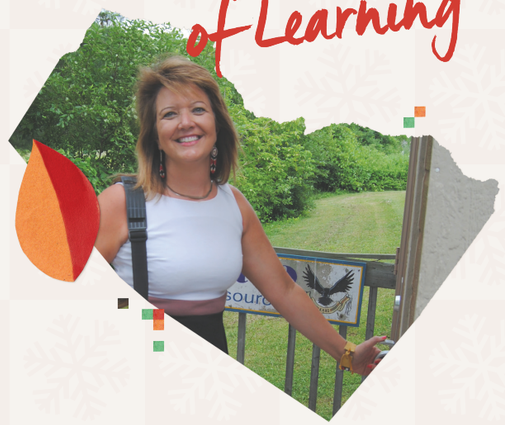

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Luc Tremblay
Manager
Tigre Géant, Val-d'Or

Search called off

Hope dwindles for last two hunters lost on James Bay

by Joshua Grant

Photo by Ian Diamond

Despite a massive search operation that involved the Department of National Defence, the Sûreté du Québec and some 300 volunteers from Quebec and Ontario, two hunters from Waskaganish are still unaccounted for.

"We're still hoping to find them even though the weather is not working with us right now," said Waskaganish Community Services Director Ryan Erless. "We'll be very alert, if we don't find anything this winter we'll still be alert in spring time."

Despite the huge effort, the fates of Kenneth Salt, 67, and Gabriel Shecapio, 30, remain a mystery. They were with a party of four who set out on a goose-hunting trip on James Bay in mid-October. The bodies of Matthew Diamond, 43, and John Patrick Salt, 48, were found soon after the group went missing.

With the time that has elapsed since the men went missing and worsening weather conditions, Erless says that most of the outside help has been asked to head home.

"Search-and-rescue operations are being terminated now," he said. "Some of us are still looking, but the federal and provincial help we had is gone and a lot of the volunteers have gone home too. It was a local decision, we had to call off the search because it was too dangerous. There's too much ice on the river and on the shores to go out by boat."

Erless noted that local Elders and the SQ are aware of a cycle that occurs when somebody drowns: the body may stay under water and surface after two to three days, then go back under and re-surface again after around 30 days. If the water is too cold or too deep, it may never surface again.

*"We had **over 300 volunteers** who came and helped out, it's surprising the number of people that showed up"*
- Waskaganish Community Services Director Ryan Erless

There are differing opinions on what may have caused the tragedy, Erless said.

"The boating accident that happened, I'm not sure if it could have been prevented," he observed. "When they ventured out they were caught in a sudden windstorm with gusts over 50 km/h. All the weight that was on the boat – four people, their hunting gear, their food, I guess it was just too much."

Erless extended his heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed to the search. He stressed that they covered as much ground as possible despite dealing with stormy weather, fierce winds, high tides and choppy water.

"It's a big area," he said. "We searched over 1000 square kilometres by air, land and water."

Erless specifically thanked those who travelled from Piawanuck, Moosonee, Moose Factory, Fort Albany, Kaschechewan, Attawapiskat, Whapmagoostui, Chisasibi, Wemindji, Eastmain, Nemaska, Mistissini and Waswanipi, noting that Oujé-Bougoumou would likely have been there too if they were not dealing with a tragedy of their own.

"We had over 300 volunteers who came and helped out, it's surprising the number of people that showed up," he said. "We're going to produce a report on our side and hopefully we can contact a few people to disseminate it to the other communities."

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Vaccination blues

by Sonny Orr

Rez Notes

Last year, the thin needle neared my bared arm as the nurse cooed and whispered to me as if I were a child, "This won't hurt a bit."

Sure enough, no pain was felt and in fact, I didn't even know she had finished injecting me with the vaccine. I waited around for a quarter hour in case of an allergic reaction. The clocked ticked so slowly that I thought I had some kind of slow-motion reaction. But no, it was just that there wasn't any second hand on the big clock on the wall of the store, where I got caught trying to avoid my annual flu shot by crafty nurses. Other brave men lined up behind me as they waited for the same symptoms to show up. After 15 minutes, we were allowed to go as no one was foaming at the mouth or had broken into a feverish sweat. Later on though, my arm felt like it was hit with a hot iron and I couldn't even lift my hand to use a bingo dabber. I was useless.

Several months later, I came down with a terrible flu that lasted for days. For a while, I thought I was rabid because of all the infected foxes and dogs, but nope, it was just the flu. I'm a brave man, but not when it comes to skull-pounding headaches, aching bones that hurt every time I changed TV channel, and noises that sounded like the aftermath of a sonic boom. Not to mention the blurry vision that clean glasses couldn't help peer through, or the fog in my brain and the consistent coughing that tired my chest and stomach muscles.

Later in the spring, I got another flu-like cold that I couldn't shake. I was away at camp and couldn't get any treatment. When I finally flew back home, I headed to the clinic, where I was immediately given two types of antibiotics, cough suppressants, headache pills and two types of puffers. A week later, I was cured. Ahhh, the taste of fresh air, the odours that I couldn't smell before, all my senses were back in working order. Food finally looked appealing enough to consume without heading to the washroom.

Thinking back, I wished that I could have had a hit of good old tamarac juice, a natural cure for many ailments. I learnt this on one of my many forays into the wild hinterland of the north, filming with the great videographer Neil Diamond. I worked as the soundman, mechanic, driver, pyrotechnics, special-effects generator and just about everything else, except for calling out "Cut!" I was down with a nasty cough that just wouldn't go away and it started affecting my high level of performance, which was constantly demanded of me by the finger-pointing director. Since

we were working on a segment that dealt with natural medicines that came from the land, I became the patient too. Two tablespoons of tamarac juice and 15 minutes later, I was cured, never having a cold or flu for many years afterwards.

This fall, during the time that the flu shots were being given to just about everyone, I missed my chance to get my annual injection. Today, I've got one mean SOB man flu. This one didn't creep up on me or take its time to settle in and ravage my system. This time it hit me within a few hours, quickly turning into a full-blown body ache and jackhammer brain pain that intensified with every cough. I'm wondering if I will make it through this time without having to be medevaced out with the "Legionnaires SARS swine avian" flu. Perhaps a sample of my blood might be used for the next production for weapons of mass destruction or better still as the ultimate base for inoculating the world and making it disease-free. Flu shot or no flu shot, I shall sneeze on and use up every tissue in town until I get my tamarac juice cure again.

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Under the Northern Sky

Quit playing games

by Xavier Kataquapit

Just about everywhere we go these days we are surrounded by people who are into gaming – console, PC and online games. There are a lot of games that have to do with war or violence in terms of first person shooters or FPS. These are shooting games where you are the character who controls a weapon that shoots other people or characters.

There are also a multitude of sports games having to do with hockey, car racing and all types of performance vehicles. There are also MMORPG, short for massively multiplayer online role-playing games. These types of games have to do with you being a character in a digital world where you play in scenarios and settings with hundreds or even thousands of other players on-line.

These games are mostly played on a console platform such as the Xbox or PlayStation or a computer, but gaming is now becoming popular on smartphones. These games are very seductive and in many cases highly developed with incredible life-like graphics and storylines.

One huge problem with gaming in general is the amount of time it takes up as people become addicted to them and spend countless hours playing them. It becomes their world and is often an escape from reality. Gaming can be like a drug or alcohol addiction in many ways. Although it seems harmless it causes a lot of problems.

Some of these games can contribute to confusion with reality and real life. Some of them are so violent that they can cause a person to normalize violence. Shooting other characters is a big part of many of these games.

Perhaps the biggest problem is that a person becomes very sedentary. Sometimes gamers forget to eat or instead have drinks that are not good for them. They consume a lot of junk food so they do not have to leave their game and they drink high-energy liquids to keep them going. Sometimes gamers will go for many hours without sleep.

I have always enjoyed games as they were an interesting form of escape for me when I was living in Attawapiskat. However, these days there is better on-line service in remote First Nations and a multitude of games. Youth are already dealing with difficult times in remote communities so gaming is very attractive to them as an escape. Many people in First Nations communities don't have access to healthy diets so gaming leads to a lack of exercise and motivation, ultimately contributing to obesity and diabetes.

Diabetes is already an epidemic in many First Nations. We are producing a new young crop of people with diabetes because of addictions to gaming.

People spend so much time on their devices playing games, communicating with others and browsing the web. This is happening with people walking on the streets in cities and towns as they carry on conversations without knowing what is going on around them. They are doing the same while driving their vehicles and I see many in restaurants with friends and family. It is so strange to be sitting at a gathering but realizing that half the people are somewhere else in their on-line world through their smartphones or tablets. I find it really weird because it is special to be able to get together with friends and family for a visit but disappointing when they do not really commit to involving themselves in this social opportunity.

Gaming makes sense in some ways, but I believe the negatives outweigh the benefits. Teens and people in their 20s and 30s should be thinking about how to have interesting and satisfying careers. They should be working to contribute in some way to their families, friends and communities in the real world. They could be thinking of travelling to other places in the world in search of new experiences and cultures. Those are real-life games I believe in.

We only have one life to play with in this reality. We should do our best to rack up as many experience points in the game of life and keep our health bar as full as possible.

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